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FM AMCONSUL PESHAWAR
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INFO RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR 4770
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD IMMEDIATE 4504
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI IMMEDIATE 1684
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE IMMEDIATE 1677
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL IMMEDIATE 1316
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI IMMEDIATE 0961
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA IMMEDIATE 0583
RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE IMMEDIATE 0631
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO IMMEDIATE 0584
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE 0719
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA IMMEDIATE 0673
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RHMFISS/CDR USSOCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUMICEA/USSOCOM INTEL OPS CEN MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PESHAWAR 000505

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/7/2018

TAGS: [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PK](#)

SUBJECT: FATA: ATTACK IN BAJAUR AGENCY TARGETS LASHKAR LEADERS AND TRIBAL ELDERS

REF: A) PESHAWAR 489, B) PESHAWAR 84

CLASSIFIED BY: Lynne Tracy, Principal Officer, Peshawar,
Department of State.

REASON: 1.4 (a), (b), (d)

Summary

¶1. (C) In the second attack on a tribal jirga in less than a month, an explosion killed a number of tribal elders including a leader of the local lashkar (tribal militia), November 6, in Bajaur Agency. Casualty estimates range from 8 to 25 killed and scores injured. There are conflicting reports about the source of the attack (suicide bomber or radio-detonated device). The tribal leaders and at least 150 members of the Salarzai tribe were discussing their next course of action against militants, after meeting with GOP officials, when the attack occurred. Suicide attacks on tribal elders occurred on October 10 in Orakzai Agency killing at least 61 Elders and March 2 when at least 40 people were killed at a similar jirga in Darra Adam Khel where tribal elders had agreed to take up arms against militants. The long term impact remains unclear, but a failure to respond to the attack on the Salarzai may have repercussions on Bajaur operations and beyond.

Most Recent Attack Kills Lashkar leader

¶2. (C) According to a FATA Secretariat official a suicide bomber killed at least 25 tribal elders and injured 38 more in the Salarzai Tribal area of Bajaur Agency. Frontier Corps sources reported lower casualty figures and that the source of the attack was a radio-detonated improvised explosive device. Among the dead is Malik Fazal Karim, a Subedar Levy Major (Ret.). He was reportedly the leader of the Salarzai lashkar. One local contact who meets regularly with lashkar leaders stated that Karim was a key motivating and organizational force within the Salarzai lashkar and his death would be felt at least in the near term.

Why Attack These Elders Now?

¶3. (C) According to local press reports, the suicide attack occurred while Salarzai elders and at least 150 tribesmen were holding a jirga in Bajaur Agency. The purpose of the jirga was to discuss the next actions to be taken by the Salarzai tribe after the recently concluded meeting with GOP officials to coordinate efforts against the militants.

¶4. (C) The Salarzai tribe in Bajaur Agency (along the border with Kunar province in Afghanistan) was the first significant laskhar raised. Since then, others have been raised, including near Peshawar. The degree to which they have "fought" militants varies widely -- the Salarzai, by many accounts, have been in some serious fights, while other lashkars simply decreed militants were not welcome, burned a house or two, and declared success.

¶5. (C) Suicide attacks on tribal elders occurred on October 10 in Orakzai Agency killing at least 61 Elders and March 2 when at least 40 people were killed at a jirga in Darra Adam Khel where tribal elders had agreed to take up arms against militants (refs A and B). To date, there appears to have been little in the way of a response to these attacks that targeted the perpetrators.

Comment

¶5. (C) The loss of so many tribal leaders and lashkar leader Malik Fazal Karim will likely have an operational impact at least in the near term. The long term impact on the Salarzai lashkar due to the attack is not yet clear. Much may depend on how the government responds. Local leaders, particularly in North and South Waziristan complained bitterly about the government's failure to exact "consequences" for the targeting of more than 200 elders in the Waziristans -- and noted the resulting loss of confidence in the government to protect its supporters. A rapid and robust response could shore up and

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strengthen local resistance to militants in Bajaur. Failure, however, to exact a cost from Bajaur's militants could undermine government plans for Bajaur and beyond.
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